

instead of around his house, or when he argues about kimbic pentameters with Nuhokov (who insists that Lear's "Never, never, never, never, never" is iambic), or when he tells Mike Nichols that Thorber is not alone in lacking self-assurance and that he, Wilson, often gets up at four o'clock in the morning to read old reviews of his books. In bits and pieces like these there is enough singularity and sheer quirkiness to keep things humming.


Second, there is evidence of the Wilsonian curiosity, as when he deepens his knowledge of "the country's history, or when he becomes interested in the founding and the subsequent fate of the old Oneida community. Wilson can't stop learning things, and it's worth remembering at this point that the crisscross information which crops up in the book is only the tipmost molecule of the quaternmost tip of the iceberg. In the period covered by *U.S. State* (1950-1970), Wilson was producing exhaustively prepared books like *The Stock of Recognition* and *Pacific Grove*, breaking into alien cultures with books like *The Secret*

"... a careful and well-studied history of the Military Religious Orders... helps us to understand the lesson that we still find painful to learn—that the infidel of those days was sometimes a much more Christian... person than his northern counterpart." Nigel Donnie, *Sunday Telegraph*... an account the book is excellent and is firmly based on primary sources, of which Seward has a formidable grasp." Richard Luckett, *New Society*, £4.95

Language in crisis

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If home life and the Army brought out the best in George Wigg, politics seems to have brought out the worst. When he writes of his political career, his style, in the earlier chapters, uncomplicated and direct, takes on a somewhat febrile, portentous, and self-congratulatory flavour. He describes with some relish a feud in the House of Commons which might have been better forgotten. In 1945 he was, against the rules of the House, entertaining a Life Peer to lunch in the Members' Dining Room. At the instigation of another member, he and his guest were obliged to move in the middle of the meal to the Strangers' Gallery.

Private Ivy

ICELY GREIG,
y Compton-Burnett
5pp. Garnstone Press. \$2.25.

Consequently the book does not pretend to offer intimate revelations, and hardly touches on anything before the period of Miss Greig's personal acquaintance with her subject. Within these limitations, though, she has a sharp eye for odd detail, and writes with an affection that is not

Pain killer

"Can nothing be done to make operation less painful?" Simpson asked himself as he watched Robert Lison remove the breast of a frightened old lady in 1887.

Simpsom soon decided to adopt midwifery as his special interest. A branch of medicine which, due largely to the teaching of two Scottish doctors, Smellie and Hunter, was now rapidly taking its proper place in medical practice. Simpsom having apparently got married because the opinion of the day held that it would be quite indecent to allow one's wife to consult an unmarried "suburbanist", succeeded to the chair of midwifery in 1850, at the age of twenty-eight.

Through no longer a Communist Party member, Mr Paynter remains a convinced socialist and a practical idealist. His story of his own life serves his cause well.

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Just how Dr Stolner will deal with this difficult subject it is intriguing to speculate. What would undoubtedly


the most catagorical of the world-imagery of the sciences into common speech, by means of lyric, parodistic, tragic-comic projection ("I don't know") and on the other, laments the loss of traditional culture. The book ends with a striking image of the present "human situation" which sounds oddly like a description of the mind of its author:

We seem to be standing in Bluebeard's castle like little of Dr. Stelner's (the foreward of the book). For the first time, the forward-looking vaulting intelligence of our species is in the foreground, which is so intricate yet so vulgar, and which is a piece of systematic evolution, fine itself in front of doors it might be better to

Tragedy he has failed to come to terms with the paradoxical nature of aesthetic experience, a paradox that was once a commonplace. Burka put his finger on it when he

says merely that it is "manifest but exceedingly difficult to talk about." Indeed it is, but just this must be talked about. Whatever it is, the processes cannot be accepted as a simple fact; it must be recognized as an act of critical choice—and perhaps even resisted. To treat the "wretched" (in Burke's sense) writings of Beckett or Kafka as a documentary of the age would be to mistake a medium for a message. Semantics, as Dr Stolerwicz knows, is a science that threatens to take the letter for the spirit. The "semantic" criticism of culture is criticism based on acceptance simply of a "linguistic crisis" as a culture

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The vanguard of the Modern Movement

L. BRION-GUERRY (ed.):
L'Année 1971
Les formes esthétiques de l'œuvre d'art à la veille de la première guerre mondiale.
Volume 1: 950pp. Volume 2: pp 952-1291.
Paris: Klincksieck, 1969fr the set.

MARCELIN PLEYNET:
L'Enseignement de la peinture
221pp. Paris: Seuil, 25fr.

In the first year of the twentieth century, W. B. Yeats affirmed that "almost certainly no great art, outside England... has arisen without a great criticism, for its herald or its interpreter and protector". His remark sets the stage for the modernist enterprise, or at least for that vanguard of the Modern Movement which we identify by the slightly deprecatory title of "Little Magazines". The fact that such magazines proliferated, and served as a battleground for the forces of traditionalism and modernism, can be seen as an indispensable accessory to the prodigious development of all the arts in the period from 1910 to 1930.

In spite of their evident importance, the "Little Magazines" have only recently begun to receive their due share of attention. This is in part because (before the space of reprints) they were notoriously difficult to locate, but also because, in England at any rate, there is little more sympathy today than there was in Yeats's time for the notion of the critic as herald. Works of art and literature are easily illustrated or reprinted, but the criticism which provided their original context is assumed to be merely secondary and therefore less worthy of discussion. It is for this reason that the second volume of *L'Année 1971*, which deals predominantly with the "Reviews internationales" of the previous period, may be regarded as of particular value. This is not to deny that the first volume, which must represent one of the most elaborate synchronic studies of the arts ever attempted, serves as a valuable guide to the early stages of the Modern Movement. But the major themes which are traced relate necessarily to existing detailed studies of the period. The exhaustive review of contemporary magazines, undertaken by around twenty international collaborators, is surely without precedent.

Undoubtedly the strongest impression is of an unusual convergence, ultimately impossible to explain by cases of personal contact, between the critical and aesthetic positions of the various editorial groups. In the first number of *The Irish Review*, it is emphasized that the purpose of the magazine is to "give expression to the intellectual movement in Ireland" rather than to sponsor a "purely literary" activity. This insistence on an intellectual basis finds a parallel in Giovanni Papini's declaration, in

WERNER HAFMANN and others:
Abstract Art Since 1945
Translated by Carill J. Hay-Shaw and others.
301pp plus 304 plates.
J. P. HODIN and others:
Figuralive Art Since 1945
Translated by Lyon Benzmira and others.
332pp including 322 plates.
Thames and Hudson, £8.50 each.

Lacerba, that "la nécessité de la révolution commence dans les idées et non pas sur les barricades", just as it is reflected in Pound's editorial "A few don't by an Imagist" in *Poetry*. Even more widespread among little magazines of this period is the recurrent conflict between classical or traditional values and those of the modern, whether this is waged in the pages of *Apollon*, the *St Petersburg Journal*, the Rumanian *Flavara*, or the Japanese *Kokka* (where through an ironic turn of events the "modernists" were led to deplore the lack of realism in the traditional Japanese modes of representation which had inspired Van Gogh and Gauguin).

Another point of interest which emerges from comparison of these various magazines is the extent to which modernist criticism of the visual arts preceded and to a great degree influenced criticism of literature. Apollinaire's work for *Les Soirées de Paris* is the clearest example, and Noemi Blumenkranz-Onimus pays the attention to its originality. The subsequent development of modernist art criticism, particularly in the years since the Second World War, is very far from demonstrating a priority of this kind. Indeed the two volumes of critical essays, *Figuralive Art Since 1945* and *Abstract Art Since 1945*, lead us to distinctly depressing conclusions about the status of the present-day art critic.

It should be stressed first of all that the decision to consider these two collections as symptomatic of a general state of affairs is quite justifiable. They derive ultimately from the editorial and critical expertise built up by the Brussels art magazine *Quadrant*, over the period between 1936 and 1966. Prefatory remarks by Jean Leymarie invoke the spectacle of an international fraternity of art critics, meeting periodically "at the great art events in Venice, in Kassel and in Sao Paulo" and otherwise engaged in carrying on the "battle" for modern art in their respective countries. The list of contributors mustered for this final enterprise is by any account an impressive one, including such well known figures as Werner Haftmann, Gillo Dorfles, Hans Jütté, Lucy Lippard, J. P. Hodin, Lawrence Alloway and Pierre Restany.

In view of the eminence of the contributors, it is worth looking with some attention at the reasons for the decidedly unsatisfactory nature of

the final product. In part this is a question of editorial control, or rather of the complete absence of any discernible editorial intervention. This is most clearly evident in the cases of overlap and omission which proliferate. The role of such painters as Wols and Fautrier in the development of postwar gestural painting in Europe is certainly worth detailed consideration. But it scarcely bears the repetition which it receives. By contrast, there can scarcely be a more devastating proof of the blind spot occupied by Charles Biederman in the development of postwar art than the fact that he is not mentioned even parenthetically by any contributor. British artists influenced by Biederman, such as Kenneth and Mary Martin and Anthony Hill, share the weight of this prohibition, and the only concession to the tradition of postwar constructive art in Britain is the occasional conscience-stricken reference to Victor Pasmore, as in Umbro Apollonio's rhetorical question: "And why not mention Victor Pasmore, who is certainly a front-ranking artist?"

These particular faults of omission and repetition are compounded by the generally low standard of critical discourse, which, with a few honourable exceptions, tends to be either obscure to the point of futility or intolerably strident. What can we make of a series of judgments like the following?

Hervé Têdénac, a more ardent spirit, did in fact move in that direction, and was unafraid of the influence of advertising techniques in the search for an "objective" style, like that of *Confidence*, 1965. James Rosenquist is

thought to owe something to Magritte. More original is the Swede, Oyvind Fahlström, who introduced the element of chance, using magnetic techniques, in the disposition of the elements of his mobile pictures. All sense of order and explicitness is sacrificed to the desperate enterprise of stringing together as many names as possible in the shortest possible space. More attractive and more illuminating by far is the unashamedly selective and cheerfully egocentric approach of Pierre Restany, whose section on "The New Realism" has the virtues as well as the vices of the evangelist. Unfortunately the evangelical tone is liable to degenerate into the stridency of Alain Jouffroy: "Although I tried to demonstrate the necessity of its abolition, art has continued to function in the galleries, museums and reviews."

M. Jouffroy's ritual invocation of the names of Michel Foucault and Chomsky serves only to remind us of the lack of any serious attempt by the critics represented to integrate the disciplines of linguistics and semiology into their discourse, just as Francine C. Legrand's contribution on "The Sign and the 'Open Form'" makes us glaringly aware of the futility of using the term "sign" without any attempt at strict definition. Both critics make the intellectual rigour of Marcelin Pleyne's *L'Enseignement de la peinture* seem doubly admirable. In 1969, Jean-Louis Schefer published in his *Sémiologie du tableau* (reviewed here in June 11, 1970) what is still the most exhaustive demonstration of semiological

method applied to a classical work of art. Marcelin Pleyne, another disciple of the French *Idéologie*, has performed a corresponding service for the art of the present century, although the weight of his attack rests not on one painting, but on the painter, Matisse.

The numerous insights which Pleyne provides—not only into the work of Matisse but also into that of Mondrian and more recent artists—can hardly be developed here. The essential point is that his essentialist point of view is a particularly virulent form of the semiological view of the genesis of Matisse. That "coupeure épistémologique" which he has diagnosed in terms in the work of Lacan, the fix for the visual artist in the example of Cézanne, and it is the example of Cézanne which engenders the subsequent contradictions between purely formal departure of Cubists and the "coupeure épistémologique" accepted by Duchamp and the Dada movement. M. Pleyne's relentless in condemning Bredon's refusal to recognize Cézanne's primordial importance:

Bredon ouvre à la fois l'œil et la voie à un mirroirisme avant-gardiste, à une naïve référence à la sociologie, à un pas manqué de la suite séquentielle (franco-américaine) qui sait (Nouveau-réalisme, Pop-art, pauvre, Art conceptuel, etc.). M. Pleyne's clenching of the fist, however, is perhaps rather strenuous. But it is difficult to find these movements in the two volumes cited previously without feeling the need for the sanity of critical discourse any more, such a cleaning may overdue.

while heads of Italian states, like the pope, come to keep meetings in classical tradition. What wanted here, of course, is a collection of the passages in classical authorities (including Herodotus, Elder Pliny and Strabo) that refer to African animals, and an examination of how this information came to be found and was assimilated in Renaissance Italy, above all, humanists, patrons and artists.

Miss Lloyd's study is illustrated with ninety-three well-chosen black and white plates, produced by a set printing which are as good as reproductions of drawings, engravings and medallions, somewhat indistinct in the case of paintings. Moreover the captions do not provide precise locations. Notes to the text are together at the end of each page, instead of at the foot of each page; they are drastically pruned, for a good deal of information is not documented while what there is very brief and derives from secondary sources. The incomplete bibliography is useful, even though the best of a work is frequently not provided, and *Bibliothèque de l'Université de Paris*. Finally, there is a useful index.

The first edition of Frank Lloyd Wright's *Genius and the Machine* published in 1949, was associated with the account of Wright's association with Louis Sullivan—his first master—by a tribute to his genius; in fact it is much more an exposition of Wright's own beliefs and an essay in his justification presented in his inflated language—a quality which says (of Sullivan and Wright) "Through the vision of each in his own work, the face of America—subsequently much of the world—was transformed." They were both, in their way, great men, but such a statement is nonsense.

Nineteen drawings by Sullivan and one by Wright have been added to the thirty-eight drawings by Sullivan reproduced in the original edition and the text has been enlarged and reprinted two articles by Sullivan and Wright's Imperial Hotel. There are fifty-five pages of photographs of Sullivan's architectural ornament.

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Psi in the sky?

ARTHUR KOESTLER:
The Roots of Coincidence
158pp. Hutchinson, £2.

Parapsychology, these days, is less the subject of intellectual wrangling than that Arthur Koestler makes out of a parable, with a parabolic history that once took it away from academic respectability and has now brought it back. Yet the arguments of the parapsychologists are as paradoxical, and their antics (like one or two of Mr Koestler's in this book) as quixotic and unreliable.

He makes a good job, too, of organizing his argument that much of modern physical theory—negative mass, for instance, or holes in space—is every bit as "occult" as parapsychology. He rightly points out its probabilistic nature. Nothing is wrong when he suggests that, since physics operates in this way, so could parapsychology. In fact, so long as it keeps physics and psychology in parallel, as it were, all is well. It is only when he starts to bend them to words each other that conviction—Mr Koestler's and the reader's—begins to falter. The examples he chooses are unsatisfactory. The experiments conducted by W. Grey Walter (unnecessarily described as "one of Britain's most respected neurophysiologists") on the use of "will power" to turn on television sets are lunatic to Mr Koestler's argument. We can accept the electrical, even the magnetic nature of the brain, and the possibilities of bio-feedback—but this is all that Dr Grey Walter's experiments are about. "Will power" which seems to strike bio-feedback—mind over matter, yes, but only in so far as the "matter" is one's own body. This has nothing to say about the parapsychological communication of dreams, the brain's influence on the growth of plants, and so on. Again, Mr Koestler gives an account of Jung's cooperation with Pauli, the physicist, in a work on *Synchronicity: an acausal connecting principle* to create an impression of the fruitfulness that can be got from osteocholists and osteichists working together. Yet, as Mr Koest-

ler admits, the result was both "very bold and very vague". It was "a stimulating exercise in unorthodox speculation, but at the same time sadly disappointing". That last remark could be said about much in *The Roots of Coincidence*. Mr Koestler does make one more ready to accept parapsychology, yet this is at the expense of making one suspect much of the same sleight of hand that the barrister employs, agreeing to withdraw, on the direction of the judge, a comment he has just made before the jury, knowing the intended effect cannot be erased.

However, there is one considerable achievement in the book—but it has nothing directly to do with parapsychology. This is the introduction Mr Koestler gives to the theories of Adrian Dobbs. As Mr Koestler points out in a footnote, Dobbs—a Cambridge physicist who worked mainly in secret defence—was killed last year while *The Roots of Coincidence*, which draws heavily on his theories, was in preparation. Dobbs's theories, however, won't die with him—quite the opposite for, with the growing interest in, and discontent about, current theories of explanation in the behavioural sciences, the rationale which Dobbs's ideas give for the way social science is a concave evidence and proof is particularly timely.

Briefly, Dobbs proposed that there exists in two dimensions, the one we are familiar with and a second, moving through a probabilistic, not a deterministic world: as Mr Koestler puts it, "it resembles less an arrow than a wave front". Given the statistical—i.e. basically probabilistic—nature of social scientific evidence, the relevance of this theory is clear. As no some of its implications for certain topical doctrines in social science—especially deterministic ones like Skinnerism.

A critical look at the detailed applications of Dobbs's theories to the social sciences is therefore now needed: to have made them more widely known could well prove Arthur Koestler's main achievement in *The Roots of Coincidence*. So far as one can tell, it doesn't appear to have been done by design.

Make mine meaningful

YORICK ALEXANDER WILKS:
Grammar, Meaning and the Machine Analysis of Language
198pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £3.

Yorick Alexander Wilks is basically a man who is clever with computers. He used to work at the Cambridge Language Research Unit, a miniature think-tank which has subsisted for ten or more years in the suburbs of the University. Since then he has found his métier in Southern California, at the Institute of Formal Studies, the Systems Development Corporation, and recently at Stanford University. Throughout his career he has operated, one suspects, in a kind of interdisciplinary or non-disciplinary limbo. Certainly, there are no signs that he has ever had strict supervision in the study of language. Nor does he himself appear to have taught regularly in a normal university department. His main contacts have been with the assortment of other people like himself.

Unfortunately, this background is all too relevant to an appreciation of the book which he has written. His central problem arises from the inherent ambiguity of many word-forms: round, for example, has one sense in I'll have a round of sandwiches, but another in I'll play a round of golf. We agree that this is so, but how could we programme a computer to make the same decisions? An answer would be important if, for example, we were ever to revive the notion of machine translation. Unless the dictionary ambiguities were resolved the machine would not know which words to choose in our target language. In tackling this problem Dr Wilks has undoubtedly shown practical sense and ingenuity. If a word could

have two or more senses then, he says, we must see how close they are to the other words with which it is constructed. These are to be determined within some standard form of "message": for example, round of sandwiches is in general a statement about "some quantity of some sort of object". If that does not suffice to determine the alternative "messages" must be matched with the other "messages" surrounding. Thus *One round will do* means a round of sandwiches if, for example, the word sandwich appears in the previous sentence. Methods of this kind may make a theoretical shudder. Nevertheless it is instructive to see how far Dr Wilks has been able to push them.

But in a discussion called *Grammar, Meaning and the Machine Analysis of Language* rough common-sense is not enough. In describing his system Dr Wilks is already rather shaky. The rules for "possible messages" are said to be of a certain formal type; but in fact they are not of this type, and their true nature is cloaked in a good deal of idiosyncratic notation. Nor is his exposition very careful. At one point, for example, he refers to a definition which one cannot find until one reads the following chapter. And this is in a note to yet another rule-notation (which, incidentally, is printed three different ways on a single line).

To pure theory Dr Wilks's failings are more central. The second chapter is essentially a sideways against Chomsky, whose theory he rejects for philosophical as well as computational reasons. But his points are taken much too far. The crux, perhaps, is whether the notion of "grammaticality" (in the sense of conforming to the rules of a given

"grammar") can have any empirical interpretation. For Dr Wilks it has none. Our "difficulty in understanding" golf or round of would for him be of the same kind as "our difficulty in understanding" in round of rousers. The problem is simply whether they are meaningful—"meaningfulness", of course, being the property his own rules are concerned with. But why is golf a round of so clearly a "mistake" for a round of golf? A round of rousers is not "corrigible" in any similar way. Oddly enough, the Chomskians themselves have been apt to oversimplify the same distinctions; only they thought it was all a matter of "grammaticality".

And how are we to interpret a "grammar" of "meaningful messages"? Dr Wilks assumes, in effect, that there is a set of things that one can ordinarily and sensibly say. He emphasizes that figures of speech allow one to extend it; but for him there is still a sense in which it is possible to "decide formally of any utterance" whether it is meaningful or not. As a practical man he undoubtedly finds this helpful. But it is really nonsense, isn't it?

Saul K. Al-Azm's *The Origins of Ken's Arguments in the Antinomies* (156pp. Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, £2.75) is an interesting contribution to the historical aspects of Keni scholarship. The author argues with some plausibility that the Theses in the four Antinomies of Pure Reason represent the Newtonian and the Antitheses the Leibnizian views of the nature of space and time. In other words, the theses and antitheses are "substantially" the views expressed by Clarke and Leib-

niz in their famous exchange. It is only the specialist reader who will notice, however, that Mr Koestler presents the parapsychologists' case better than parapsychologists themselves, though he himself has never done any experimentation. He goes straight to the point and is right, certainly, when he says that two things get in the way of a ready acceptance of parapsychology by most of us—that it goes against the familiar laws of physics, and that its nature is so quixotic and unreliable.

He makes a good job, too, of organizing his argument that much of modern physical theory—negative mass, for instance, or holes in space—is every bit as "occult" as parapsychology. He rightly points out its probabilistic nature. Nothing is wrong when he suggests that, since physics operates in this way, so could parapsychology. In fact, so long as it keeps physics and psychology in parallel, as it were, all is well. It is only when he starts to bend them to words each other that conviction—Mr Koestler's and the reader's—begins to falter. The examples he chooses are unsatisfactory. The experiments conducted by W. Grey Walter (unnecessarily described as "one of Britain's most respected neurophysiologists") on the use of "will power" to turn on television sets are lunatic to Mr Koestler's argument. We can accept the electrical, even the magnetic nature of the brain, and the possibilities of bio-feedback—but this is all that Dr Grey Walter's experiments are about. "Will power" which seems to strike bio-feedback—mind over matter, yes, but only in so far as the "matter" is one's own body. This has nothing to say about the parapsychological communication of dreams, the brain's influence on the growth of plants, and so on. Again, Mr Koestler gives an account of Jung's cooperation with Pauli, the physicist, in a work on *Synchronicity: an acausal connecting principle* to create an impression of the fruitfulness that can be got from osteocholists and osteichists working together. Yet, as Mr Koest-

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AVAILABLE FALL 1972

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John Philip Kemble

John Philip Kemble's Promptbooks
Edited by Charles H. Shattuck, 1972, 11 vols.
Price not set

The Kemble promptbooks, formerly in the possession of the Kemble family and little known to scholars, passed into the Folger collection in November 1969. Professor Shattuck, author of *The Shakespeare Promptbooks: A Descriptive Catalogue* (1965), has selected and edited a group of twenty-seven Shakespearean and six non-Shakespearean promptbooks, and has provided a general introduction to the collection as well as an introduction to each of the promptbooks.

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Warehouse on the Wash

VANESSA PARKER:
The Making of King's Lynn
226pp plus 70 plates. Phillimore.
£5.50.

Within the past twenty years or so, the study of urban history has been revolutionized in this country. The great historians of the recent past, most notably Tait of Manchester, usually confined themselves to profound, unrepeatable studies of the constitutional aspects of town history (though Carl Stephenson, the American scholar, devoted a good deal of his *Borough and Town*, 1933, to the topographical development of English towns). Since then other scholars have written about the topographical or physical, as distinct from the institutional, side of town development, and a whole new field has been cleared for cultivation. Another trend has been the near-sociological analysis of the structure and growth of nineteenth-century industrial towns. Altogether, urban history has become very fashionable.

There is yet another change on the way, of which Vanessa Parker's book is the best representative so far. One is familiar, especially on the shelves of second-hand bookshops, with the sheets of hooks which describe the "old buildings" of a given town with the aid of copious line-drawings and occasional colour-plates. The buildings were chosen because they were "picturesque" and the text was usually vague about dates and above all about structural details. Such books generally had little scholarly value, and are useful today chiefly as showing us how much has disappeared in the path of the German bomber or the motor-car. No attempt was ever made to describe the structure of those buildings; plans were almost never given; no attempt was made to relate the buildings to the classes of people who built them (other than ascribing anything large to a wool-merchant) or to the purposes they served as shown in their ground-plan and the disposition of their rooms.

In King's Lynn, Dr Parker has chosen a marvellous subject, one of the leading ports of medieval and Tudor England, a town rich in domestic, commercial and public buildings from the fifteenth century onwards. Since she began work, much has been wantonly demolished, but Lynn remains one of our best towns to look at, and at least (though it is no excuse) the vanished buildings have been carefully recorded in her architectural drawings and photographs. Dr Parker's book contains scores of line-drawings, all well reproduced, but the photographs (more than forty in all) have been badly treated. Many are despoiled (fuzzy (no doubt due to some economical process of reproduction) and are unworthy of such a capable and expensive book.

Dr Parker begins with an account of the rather complicated geography of the Wash rivers and their changing

ing courses which culminated in the formation of the major estuary of the Great Ouse. On the eastern shore of this estuary the then bishop of Norwich, who owned the land, founded a town in the year 1091. This flourished from the beginning, so that by the end of the fifteenth century the port was described as "the turnkey" of a river-system that served no fewer than eight rich counties.

Recently the town was chosen as one of five historic towns for special study by the Department of the Environment, but this proposal fell through for local reasons. In default, Dr Parker's book covers a good deal of the ground from the medieval period to the beginning of the eighteenth century, with special emphasis on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There is, incidentally, a curious blind spot in her failure to explain how Lynn came to change its name from Bishop's Lynn to King's Lynn in 1537. This is not simply an antiquarian point for it resulted from Henry VIII's outrageous pillage of the see of Norwich in the preceding year: the plunder of the bishops' lands has been completely overshadowed by that of the monasteries. Lynn became royal property and twenty years later it obtained the fee-farm of the town from Mary. Roughly speaking, this meant the right to control its own affairs and destiny in every way upon the payment of an annual rent to the Crown.

Dr Parker relates the buildings she has measured and drawn to a wide range of documentary evidence in the borough records and elsewhere. Here we have the proper marriage of fieldwork and the written record. She discusses the ground-plan of the important merchants' tenements, whose dwelling-houses generally lay on a main street and whose property stretched back a considerable distance to the river-front. This was so valuable that individual plots were only twenty or thirty feet wide (about the same as a High Street frontage in a busy medieval town), so that most of the warehouses presented their gable ends to the river and were loaded straight from the ships. Moreover, as the river-front was reclaimed and more land was added to the shore, the richer merchants extended their warehouses to the new waterfront. Lynn had also extensive fish-houses, and a considerable shipbuilding industry which must have left some traces on and near the river and its creeks (here called "fleets").

Not only does Dr Parker go fully into the economic background of the private and public buildings of the town but she also examines the composition of the governing body. Older historians apparently studied the constitutional history of boroughs for its own sake, but it has a much greater significance than they perceived. Why do men form oligarchical governing bodies? Surely not just for the enjoyment of power, but also for private profit. One

recalls Adam Smith's remark that bodies of merchants seldom meet together without conspiring against the public good.

Lynn was given a new charter by Henry VIII in 1534 setting out a completely closed oligarchical self-perpetuating body of aldermen, and common council. The first two groups were from what were called in the

potentiores, "the powerful". The rest of the community was divided between the *mediores* the *inferiores*, a simple classification that would take a modern scholar to unravel and describe. Although this is still the set-up in English government, behind the façade of annual democratic elections, Lynn this oligarchical constitution meant in practice the greater merchants dominated the government of the town for centuries. Thus between 1550 and only five of the mayors were any but merchants among the men. This meant in practice that commercial and public law was carried out by an oligarchy and fairly rapidly so, probably, the kind of town we see today. Early, the Elizabethan city council, Exeter, another wealthy town, was dominated by the merchants, and it was they who constructed the first ship-canal in the town, between 1564 and 1567, a navigational and closed corporation lent themselves to private plundering of the common a whole (just like local government today) but they also indirectly much public good. Smith saw this apparent contradiction and was led to postulate a "invisible hand". In the case of Lynn, the merchants intended only their own gain, but they were led by an invisible hand to promote an end which no part of their intention. The invisible hand worked, the town of Lynn in these centuries but in a stagnant or declining economy it did not work in the long run.

The "unreformed corporation" have had a bad time in the banks, certainly in school history, and Dr Parker was right to examine the personnel and power of Lynn corporation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for a great deal to do with the later development of this town. She has shown the way to another new path in urban history. This is a pioneer book, a number of facts that most expected in any original work. *The Making of King's Lynn* is how a number of disciplines made to come together: archaeologist, the architectural, the economic and the institutional historian, all have a thing to offer to urban history. They usually do it in their own compartments. Dr Parker has a brave attempt to knit them one book.

often deficient in taste and concern, and there is a critical eye to some recent urban development.

Notwithstanding that the book is essentially for the traveller, it is heartening to find a competent of the recently improved posting of footpaths and the opening of long-distance routes and those in the Pennines, the Welsh Marches.

The short descriptions of the county are now for the first grouped together at the beginning of the five regional sections. Preliminary pages of general information on such matters as accommodation and currency are included for tourists and for the traveller. The *Blue Guide* in the revised form is still very good for money.

On and off the road

STUART ROSSITER (Editor):
Blue Guide to England
703pp including 81 maps and plans.
Benn. £3.50 (paperback, £2.25).

It was through the England of 1920 that the original *Blue Guide* conceived: the tourist. Now in the maturity of an eighth edition, this standard guide has adapted itself to the changes of half a century and remains as almost indispensable a companion for visitors to this country. Revision, as Stuart Rossiter does not much point, after all, in calling attention to the attractions of a country must perforce move at sixty or eighty miles an hour or be resented as an obstruction. Nor for that matter, in dwelling on the charms of a village where motorists are earnestly

dissuaded from lingering. On the other hand, there are many country places where comparative quiet has returned thanks to a new by-pass road, and towns where restriction of traffic has relieved the sightseer who is willing to walk.

Civil reconstruction since the Second World War has made it necessary for the description of many towns to be entirely rewritten and for town plans to be redrawn. But in all cases the guidebook performs its threefold purpose of telling one how to get there, what may be found on the way, and what to look for on arrival. The function of a guide is description rather than critical comment, and it is only in Mr Rossiter's thoughtful introduction that broad reflections are made on the changing scene. Here both the conservationists and the progressives are found too

of this year there was a repeat showing on BBC Television of Alec Guinness reading "Little Gidding". Very good it was in *Radio Times*: twenty minutes devoted to a great poem spoke of a great—and, for the purpose, a suitably actor. On the other hand, however, the whole affair seemed out of proportion to the poem: it demonstrated in that space most of the reasons why television finds it hard to handle poetry.

Newcastle gives some idea of the television's ability to tolerate individual reading or talking. Sir Alec Guinness was very much alone and in a quiet room, setting a doubtless the poet to focus our attention on him so on to his words, but that was what happened, and length of shot: a poet with a long line of thought, a poet who obstinately remained that one man reading. The eye got used and the attention was directed and the attention was directed and the attention was directed.

Naturally the director knew this and did not go on uninterrupted: he cut from time to time to turn of events, complementary to the words. Sir Alec's voice went on; the eye cut in the change of scene, and became so interested that there was a little power of attention left over. By the end of twenty minutes we had not quite heard the poem, and this is the dilemma of very old television: straight reading is too dull; illustrate the reading is to miss the language corresponds to the eye takes precedence. Norman Hand of Television Arts, who has been in the BBC, feels that the director ought to be more aware of the poem, but is only too aware of the difficulties. Except from his own experience, he seems to be under very much pressure to solve them, for of the majority interests poetry is one of the most minor. You would have thought that living poets and their poems might push for poetry on television, but according to Mr Swales they do nothing of the sort.

I've turned to radio there are by comparison few problems in the way of poetry: it is a natural for the radio, which can be criticized only for being rather like with it. Peter and Anthony Thwaites have done some of the end of six months' work of weekly twenty-minute readings from the ground from Chaucer to the late 1920s and early 1930s. This is a pioneer book, a number of facts that most expected in any original work. *The Making of King's Lynn* is how a number of disciplines made to come together: archaeologist, the architectural, the economic and the institutional historian, all have a thing to offer to urban history. They usually do it in their own compartments. Dr Parker has a brave attempt to knit them one book.

Two-part study of the poets of the Second World War? Both books 1 and 4 have tried their hand at this usually tied to some notable performance. Either way, it is a difference that makes a difference. It creates a satisfactory tension, a sense of occasion, of battle, festival. If poetry is really interested in broadening poetry then this radio technique might provide an answer. There is a little lack of visual interest in a group of poets declaiming their poems and other people's work—some of them are no mean actors and the sense of an audience, a part from the energy, would take the eye off the viewer crying "that's it, that's it, that's it". The book has already been attempted by Henry Living and Alec Glas, who have accomplished actors—recitations of songs, sketches and poems; although their material was so good, the presentation worked well indeed.

Writing earlier in this series of poems and of the type of fiction *Jackanory* does, drawing extensively on literary sources: *Beowulf*, *Beatrix*

BOOKS AND THE BBC—3

Poets, children, and reviewers

BY DAVID WADE

capable limitations on what radio and television can give us: first, the physical boundaries inherent in them; second the imperative to give the audience-cum-body what it wants. What audiences appear to want is in some ways even more limiting than one might suppose. Take readings, for example: Radio 4's *Story Time* with its criterion of "a good story well told" should give plenty of leeway, and as we find such favourites as *The Cricket Song* (slightly over-enthusiastic) or *Vice Versa* (also we find Scott's ghost stories. Now if you compare the listening figures for these two quite distinct types of material, one thing emerges: people like Anstey and Mansur: they do not much care for Sir Walter's phantasmagoria.

This is illustrative of a more general state of affairs in broadcasting, and one which may also help to explain the scarcity of poetry: the familiar goes down well; stories which are strange and unaccountable find a relatively small audience—and this applies even on radio, which prides itself on being the medium of the imagination. Thus not only poetry and ghosts but science fiction, too, gets a rather poor reception; so far as I can ascertain, that extraordinary vision, *Childe Harold's End*, has never yet been read on radio. Of course it is said of science fiction generally that it has failed truly to grasp the imagination of the reading public, and I have heard this attributed to the circumstance that much of what used to be fiction has now become science fact. There must be other disincentives—like the appalling style in which much of it has been written and its widespread inability to create interesting characters and human situations.

Television, as watchers of *Star Trek* will confirm, has its own reasons for fighting shy of SF—such as the vast cost of avoiding visual banality. This would not deter radio, although the literary shortcomings must do so. Yet science fiction does exist which is both well written and interesting from a human standpoint; precious little finds its way into the loudspeaker. It shares this fate with other out-of-the-ordinary material, with fairy-tale and legend, too. It is hard not to fall in with that rather depressing conclusion, one firmly implied by my allimentary metaphor: that in the main we listeners and viewers want of broadcasting not that it should provide new and thought-provoking experiences but that it should confirm what we already know or believe about our world.

Stories for the young

There is one arm of broadcasting which clearly and consistently goes against this and does so, evidently, with its audience's overwhelming approval: children's television. The allimentary parallel does not quite extend to children: for what are no doubt compelling reasons of evolution, they are in the literal sense the world's most conservative feeders and have to be cajoled into experimentation. Tell them a story, however, a tale of mystery and imagination, and they gather round in droves. This is exactly what the BBC's *Jackanory* does, drawing extensively on literary sources: *Beowulf*, *Beatrix*

Potter, Alan Garner, the Rev Awdrey's railway engines. It casts the net wide and there is a high content in its catch of fairy-tale myth and the exceptionally resonant novel of the kind created by Rosemary Sutcliffe. It is interesting to see what else the young will take that adults will not: classic adaptations, as I have pointed out, turn and run from the visible narrator (or even the invisible *Jackanory* depends on and makes a feature of him. Actors, chosen for their narrative skill, tell the stories, which are illustrated by film or visuals: Beatrix Potter's own paintings; specially commissioned, superbly atmospheric drawings for *Beowulf*; dramatic photographs for *Alan Garner's Eldor*. Here there is no difficulty in meeting the narrator's eye, no sense of incomprehensibility. What is happening? Why is the same technique held to be inappropriate or unsophisticated when applied to adult story-telling? Is there something inherently juvenile about it? Or perhaps something no longer juvenile enough in adult audiences?

The child who thrives on legend, myth and fairy-tale is among adults arguably a stereotype, and one might suspect that the quantity of traditional material is there primarily because that is what the grown-ups in charge believe their audiences ought to like. Monica Sims, who runs Children's Television at the BBC, says that in fact this kind of material—the story with an element of strangeness—generally is the most popular: this was mirrored and confirmed in a story competition which *Jackanory* ran. In her view children seem to need whatever it is that myth and legend have to give; without being reduced to hysteria, they need a certain element of fear and uncertainty. Adults, apparently, need nothing of the sort, or do not think they do; certainly they ask for little, and get what they ask for. Classics of legend turn up from time to time on radio: *Gilgamesh*, *Morte D'Arthur*, *Gowin*. Usually these are given to Radio 3, where doubtless it fits their slanting in literary history which assures them a hearing by an immeasurably small audience. It is the sense of such stories that there are other realities. Large numbers of children have no problem with that concept and you would think that we, as adults confronting a world we find ourselves less and less able to account for, would find it easier, not harder, to accept that the testimony of our own eyes and ears may not tell us quite the whole story. The evidence is all the other way: in overwhelmingly large numbers we do not want to know of visions, intuitions, insights. This is a condition which we call maturity, and the child's openness to such perceptions is attributed to an ignorance which we hope will grow out of as quickly as possible.

Contrary to what we are told of television—that it atrophies the capacity to read—the makers of children's television are so sure of its stimulating effect that they think it worthwhile to notify public libraries and publishers when a particular book is about to be broadcast. There are other pointers in the same direction, and this brings me to the last aspect of the book/broadcasting relationship I wish to touch on: review and criticism, and their effect. Facts and figures are hard to come by, but one publisher

told me that, after the short Sunday papers, he would hope for a review on radio. Another said that by far the most influential mention a book can receive comes not from any of the overt book programmes but from Radio 4's *Today*. With an audience of 4½ million for each of its two editions this may not be surprising, especially as the programme is said to be essential listening for newsmen and literary editors wondering what new marvels they are missing.

The author, not the book

On radio there are two regular reviewing programmes: *Now Read On* (Radio 4) goes out every week; *Arts Commentary* (Radio 3) is occasionally devoted to books. The limitations of both are the ones we have already spoken of, although they apply very much more to *Now Read On*. This attracts an extremely heterogeneous audience of

about 200,000, which must be entered for with as many as possible of the hundreds of books pressing for attention. In each programme seven or eight titles may be mentioned; it will be a lucky book which gets more than six minutes to itself, equivalent perhaps to 600 words, but words for speaking on the air, ephemeral and without the density of print. What is the special attraction of a radio review? Is any kind of mention to an audience of that size worth having? Does the personal flavour of the spoken word have compensations? Is it that, as the name implies, *Now Read On* tends to select only those books about which it can say something commendatory? By comparison *Arts Commentary* is less kind and more demanding: it attempts only about half the number of titles and expects greater comprehension of the spoken word from an audience numbering some 50 per cent of that for *Now Read On*. It likes to build its programme round a theme and, where Radio 4 diverts its listeners by interviewing authors, *Arts Commentary* relies sternly on professional critical comment. In weight it probably comes as near the Sunday paper level of reviewing as the spoken word can manage.

Radio 3 can offer also something approaching the kind of essay-review to be found in the *TLS*. Commonly a talk on this wavelength will be based on a recent book; discussions, too, may do the same. *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* was handled as a conversation between a psychologist and a sociologist about B. F. Skinner's major contention. On Radio 4 the method is different: here Lord Roberts, Lawrence Daly and others gather round a microphone to talk about the view of conditions in the mining industry given by *Ten Year Silence*, or Anthony Jay outlines the thesis of his *Corporation*

The Grimani Breviary

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION BY MARIO SALMI

One of the finest examples of late medieval illuminations, this Flemish breviary was acquired in 1520 by the Venetian cardinal Domenico Grimani and is now the most precious of the manuscripts in the Biblioteca Marciana. There it has long aroused the admiration of scholars, but never before have all its 110 pages of miniatures been reproduced in colour in book form. The sacred and secular scenes, rendered with the humour and love of colour and detail characteristic of the Low Countries, offer a picture gallery of life in Flanders in about 1500: We see landscapes and townscapes, interiors and exteriors, costumes and customs from the nobleman at his banquet to the peasant ploughing, building, fishing or bringing in the vintage. Many pages also have delicate and beautiful borders depicting flowers, fruit, butterflies, jewels or wood-carvings. Professor Salmi's text covers the breviary's history and the style and iconography of its three artists (Alexander and Simon Bening, and Gerard Horenbout). With 140 illustrations, including 110 full-page colour plates. £25.00

Thames and Hudson

T. G. H. STEELOW:
Songs of Central Australia
775pp. Angus and Robertson, £30.

The very first paragraph of the introduction sets the depressing mood of the whole book. The author explains why he chose the word "song" to describe sung or rhymed verse, by referring not to American concepts, but to Latin, Greek and German words. Thus, addressing himself to the average reader who may not have "studied classical tongues" and has only superficial knowledge of poetry, he includes in his study of Aranda poetry a quick correspondence between a word in literature with long associations on one massive quota-

The musical picture never begins to be clear. Rules of music are stated or implied (e.g., on pages 21 and 90), "common rhythmic measures" are identified and even named (and musical preferences are assumed, but there is no adequate glossary of Aranda musical terms, nor a sign of his knowledge of their language and his tributes to their intelligence; the author seems not to have discussed with his "dark Australian friends" their own view of their music. There is no evidence to support the assumptions that the Aranda have their own "musical

Thus there was no true lyric verse; there were no "elegies, hymns, panegyrics, songs of triumph, prophetic, gnomic verse," or "riddles." Emotion was expressed in the very act of singing; the daily routine was transformed, both by the corporeal nature of the occasion and the special form of the songs. They were sung when the Aranda came together for initiations into adulthood, for ceremonies designed to increase the plants and animals which provided their daily food, or in times of sickness and of death which threatened the solidarity of the whole community. The sentiments of the songs were organized in couplets, with more attention to intricate rhythms and to word-weaving than to the exact meaning of the sentences. Curiously enough, the author's interest in English language and literature does not extend to Edith Sitwell and Gertrude Stein, but he describes the effect of Aranda poetry very aptly as like "a peal of bell-chimes" in which variation is achieved "by changing just one chime in each sequence".

The book, then, is probably as inaccessible to most people as were common human experiences to Aranda youths. Subsistence in the Australian desert was harsh enough, but an ingenious technology and careful control of resources made life possible and even afforded considerable leisure time. Why was this time not used to improve the standard of living, and why did tribal custom demand yet more suffering in the cruelty, blood and unger of circumcison and other rituals? Was a reign of terror really necessary to persuade "all active and ambitious young men" that memorizing those songs was "the highest goal in life", and that these songs were "magically potent charms" necessary for "all the prodigious pursuits of everyday life"? Is there some deep human desire for pain as a payment for keeping alive? Is not the desire to live sufficient to encourage young men to learn those parts of the songs which are necessary for survival, as cognitive maps of the environment? The Bushmen of the Kalahari have managed to live in similarly harsh conditions, but without the coercion and the violence and, it seems, without the poetry.

Some of Central Australia with something of the creativity and intellectual achievements of the Andean forebears but little of the quality of their lives, their poetry surely intended to reflect and enhance, fit is essentially a shallow and unrewarding account, which reflects not so much the austere and efficiency of the Andean resistance economy in a harsh environment, as the verbal extravagances of their religious superstition.

THE SOCIETY for French Historical Studies was founded some twenty years ago by a group of American and Canadian specialists in French history. Apart from holding an annual conference, the Society publishes a review of the field some once or twice a year. This year the Society held its bi-monthly annual conference in Ottawa under the auspices of the City Council and the University of Ottawa.

It was the first time it had ever been held in Canada. No place could have been better suited for such an occasion. Ottawa is a truly bilingual city with the neighbouring town of Hull on the other side of the Ottawa river and in the Province of Quebec, mostly French-speaking. It was a most suitable rendezvous for a conference which included far more French than previously and drew out the participation of French-speaking universities—such as Ottawa is itself bilingual as well as are that of his countrymen from Paris, Oxford, Sussex, the English-speaking universities of London, and the United States. Of course, papers read at the conference, and it was in fact in French and much of the discussion that followed was in that language. It was particularly gratifying to see that long-standing friends and was suitably described in a speech in which Senator in French and English altered by the French Ambassador to Ottawa. To an English specialist in French History what seemed especially valuable was the opportunity to meet French-Canadian specialists of the history of New France, a number of whom are now working on the social history of the country. It was also comforting to discover that French-Canadian thought is like any other form of

If the record of research being carried out on French history by Canadians of both linguistic groups turned out to be most impressive and often highly original, it appeared to an outside observer who, before the conference, lectured in Hull, Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto, that the position of history as a teaching subject within the Canadian university curriculum was seriously threatened, both from within and from outside pressures. A number of provincial governments, including that of Alberta, insist that the only history taught should be "relevant" — the current problems that may mean — to the entire problems of Canadian society. One can well imagine to what a sorry state history might be reduced in such a context. Furthermore, in many Canadian public schools, history has almost ceased to be taught, being replaced by "Social Studies"; a prospect hardly enough in itself, which would no doubt have long ago produced an explosive situation on the Canadian campus, had it not been for the Canadian weather. The "revolutionary" sensus is wretchedly short in a country in which the university year extends from September to April. There are, after all, advantages in living among les arpentés de neige. But this relative lack of "enfrontration" and of stiff-student antagonism can not be attributed to any virtues within the Canadian university system. It probably owes more to the common sense of most Canadian students — less solemn than those of their neigh-

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

So much for the Provincial governments. Partially under pressure from them, partly under that of the student body, attempts to subject students to serious written competitive examinations at the end of their third year have largely been abandoned. There are examinations, but they are somewhat farcical; and model answers can be purchased from agencies that specialize in this form of mid-education. Examinations have been supplemented by a system of continuous "assessment" of quite extraordinary complexity (another opportunity for the computer to take over from the human being). This may be "democratic" but, in terms of knowledge, understanding, assimilation and expression, it is pernicious. It is difficult for no outsider to obtain any clear impression of the intellectual baggage of a Canadian History student at the end of his course. But it was the complaint of many professors of History, including one who had formerly taught in the United States, that their students were purely illiterate, that they never gained any experience either in writing or assessing evidence. They might at best be able to fill in one of those forms: "Mury Queen of Scot was; King of Afglanistan, Buddhad Boodleez, Joann of Arc, Gryvia Pnnkhaurst, Germaine Greer. Cross over where Incoorect."

In short, the purpose of history as

It is to be hoped that competitive written examinations will everywhere be re-established—the example of some of the English new universities has witnessed eloquently to the dangers of "assessment" without

One day, no doubt, when their consciences allow them, many of the American expatriates will return to their own country. If little can be expected of provincial governments (though that of Ontario seems well disposed towards history and that of Nova Scotia no doubt would be if it had any money), much can be done at federal government level. The Canada Council, an admirable, enlightened body, has put great efforts into the encouragement of research. The study of history is closely involved with the evolution of Canada itself, a national entity over the next few years. Whatever the future, in this respect, it will not be an insignificant one.

**ROLAND W. FORCE and
MARYANNE FORCE:**
The Fuller Collection of Pacific
Artifacts

This sumptuous volume is not only a pictorial account of a magnificent collection, but also a memorial to the collector, Captain A. W. F. Fulker, who died on December 13, 1961, in his seventy-ninth year. An account of his life is given in an introductory chapter. He served in the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry throughout the First World War, but was invalided out of the army in 1918, and being unable, for health reasons, to follow his former profession of soldier, thereafter devoted himself to what had previously been a spare-time pursuit, the collecting of ethnological specimens, mainly from the Pacific, but also from other parts

The guiding principle, in forming my collection, has been, and is, the study of comparative technology and the evolution of man, more especially in relation to the native culture of the races of the Pacific area. From this it will be gathered that there are quite equally or rarely but more artistic although such objects take a place, and an important place, in the whole, and that comparatively unimportant specimens are of equal value, and, in many cases, equally rare.

present Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, where it is still considered fundamental.

The collection, which began with a Fijian war club given to Fuller as a child, finally numbered more than 6,500 specimens. As it grew larger, and Fuller grew older, he became increasingly concerned about its ultimate destination. He wished it to be kept intact, and to be placed in an institution where it would be properly cared for, studied, exhibited, and generally appreciated. He would have liked to present it to the British Museum, but financial considerations made this impossible. It was eventually acquired by the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, by means of an ad hoc fund, the Fuller Collection Purchase Fund, which attracted some extremely generous donors. With this museum, Fuller and his wife enjoyed the most friendly relations.

Following two introductory ses-

photographs of individual objects, classified according to the major regions of the Pacific: Polynesia, Melanesia including New Guinea, and Australia. Micronesian specimens in the collection are few, and none is figured. These major regions are sub-divided into their main island groups, each prefaced by a short account of its characteristics, a brief appraisal of its craftsmanship and notes on the objects illustrated. With the single exception of Fuller's portrait, all the illustrations are in black and white. All are excellent, and many can fittingly be described as superb. The authors stress that what is offered is a sample of their own choosing, and that the choice was made, partly with a view to photographic possibilities, certain categories, such as barkcloth, being omitted as needing colour to make an effective picture.

Not selection with the compass of a review could give an adequate

may perhaps be made of "good-image" from Hawaii, since extremely rare to find a specimen complete with its covering of fine scales, as this is. Among the most effective photographs are examples of wood curving from the Solomon Islands: bows, canoe-prow lines and other objects decorated with pearl shell inlay. An enlarged area of part of a very fine shell decorated forms the frontispiece. Other places notable for their little interest is a canoe-prow line from the Trobriand Islands acquired by the pioneer mission, Thomas Chalmers, and a number of Australian specimens collected by Bates. The first woman to be a boat among Australian aborigines. Ethnologists and museum workers will find this book useful in many ways, not least to providing information on their undocumented specimens. It should appeal also to collectors in search of mollus, and to

JEAN ZIEGLER :
Le Pouvoir africain
227 pp. Paris : Seuil. 20 fr.

with some seasonal variations. The book is an impression of a number of separate essays strung together to make a book, sometimes without any apparent link between them, though a general theme: a comparison between two African thought (very largely of the 1970s) – the thought of Ruudolf and thereabouts and the thought of the African diaspora (largely of the 1980s and in Brazil). The most interesting and in some ways original part of the book is the discussion of African notions of time and history.

When the novelist is also a Separatist

ERT AQUIN
de la suite
Montreal : Cercle du Livre de
est \$2.50.

Englishman visiting Canada for
first time will probably know next
nothing about the literature of
the country. At most he may have read
of Hemingway's idyllic *Marin Chap-
man*. Nor will his French counter-
part be much better off, though at
last he will have had the chance to
read occasional québécois novels
published in Paris and a certain
amount of French-Canadian poetry.

cases, the problem of being "eclipsé qui parle français en Amérique" (to quote Jacques Godbout). For if the 1960s have seen the emergence of a new style of novel in French Canada, they have also seen the emergence of a new French Canada. Many of today's writers have had something to do with the separatist movement, and have felt deeply the political, economic and cultural dependence (or oppression) of their country. Their novels are not without political ambiguity, but their concern for the public world is no less serious than that suggested by Robbe-Grillet's *Projet pour une révolution à New York*.

nième, he mimes a great deal of play with Holbein's anemorphosis of the "Ambassadors," where the emblem of death is concealed under a sumptuous disguise.

At the same time, this title evokes one of *M. Aquin's* major themes, that of passing time, shifting reality, uncertain identity. All his novels are experienced as motion, they slide between our fingers or project themselves forward in time to a point beyond themselves. In the same way, in *Point de fuite* we can see *M. Aquin's* own destiny shifting and a new work taking and changing shape, running away from its author as he

eroticism and carries them one stage further. In addition, even more strongly than in *Prochain episode*, he is here preoccupied with the complex form he is creating. This is a labyrinthine construction; its shifting point of view and movement to and fro in time emphasize a mystery at the centre. Gradually, an excessively violent tale emerges from the revelations of what appears to be a series of writers; we learn of the murder of the English-speaking Joan by a frenzied ebullient separatist, Pierre X, Mignaut, who then passes for dead and pursues Joan's sister, the mistress of another revolutionary pharma-

Secretly observed by his wife, Jean-William kills the chemist and they both independently make their way back to Montreal, where Christine takes up again with a former lover, Robert. The jealous husband shoots and maims Robert, who is taken to a hospital; here Christine assumes again, this time to a doctor, and finally commits suicide (like Mag-nant in *Trou de nuivoire*).

ignorance is doubtless ignorance. But for the individual, at least, it is largely a lack of information not common to all. Universities are not the only place where people read books, but it is legitimate that in hardly any other universities is French Canadian literature officially noticed. This is the change, as there is a rich literature to explore, not least in fiction. The *publicités* novel has moved away from *Maria Chapdelaine* which was in any case the work of a Frenchman. In the 1960s there was an explosion of what textbooks usually calling le nouveau roman. The French counterpart, the *nouveau roman*, is not so distinct from one another and like in their opposition to a traditional, caricatural "traditional" is the linear novel of serious, social and psychological characters where the story is told and presented in an unquestionable manner by a reliable narrator. Against this somewhat caricaturally, the *publicités* novels which are non-linear, ironic, self-conscious about the process of narrative and finally, complex and difficult, would be true of France

Any general account of recent Québecois fiction would have to include such important books as Gérard Bessette's *L'incubation*, Jean Basile's *Le Grand Khaï*, Réjean Ducharme's *L'Avole des acalés* and Marie-Claire Blais's *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*. (The last two of these both explore—in very different ways—the typically French-Canadian theme of oppressed childhood, which was powerfully treated many years ago in an influential short story by the poet Anne Hébert, "Lo Tor-reot"). In particular, one would need to say something about Jacques Godbout, whose *Salut Godeau!*, published in 1967, is coming to be seen as one of the landmarks of modern French-Canadian literature.

Hubert Aquin is very much a practitioner of this new novel. His latest book, *Point de fuite*, an assembly of essays, letters, plans for TV broadcasts, and the like, contains some fairly straightforward informative material for the readers of his novels, but it is set under the sign of his baroque title. The "point de fuite" is technically the vanishing-point of Renaissance perspective, and Aquin is obviously much concerned with *trompe-l'œil* and illusion. The book carries a cover design by Aquin himself, a noble baroque

M Aquin would be a compelling writer in any society; he is all the more compelling because of the links he forges between his own obsessions and the rapidly changing destiny of his country. He was involved early on to the Separatist movement, and this activity was vividly reflected in his first novel, *Prochain épisode* (1965). This is a novel of betweenness, written in detention and largely concerned with its own composition, which is seen as a compensatory activity between two events, a glorious date in the past (a triumph of love or revolution) and a triumphant day which has still to come, the "next episode" of the title. Immobilized, the narrator invents a rapidly moving and often baffling plot, apparently a mixture of the real and the imaginary, a thriller set in Geneva and parodying the international spy story. The whole book oscillates between the downward pull of despair as the narrator feels himself cut off from life, drifting into the depths of Lake Geneva, and the formulaic virtue with which he pushes the story forward and carries himself on towards his release from prison and the liberation of Quebec.

M Aquin's second novel, *Trou de*

est in the Côte d'Ivoire. It is a disturbed and disturbing tale; M Aquin constantly sets up parallels between his freckled and illogical forms, the violence of his protagonists and the state of his country. Once again we are, between events, between the frenzy, destruction and unreality of the "trou de mémoire" and what appears to be a movement of hope at the end, where we are left with the pregnant, newly *quibéclois* figure of RR, who has been raped by Magtani before his suicide: "je porte un enfant qui s'appellera Magtani" - et jusqu'au bout, je l'espère, et sans avoir peur de son nom."

M Aquin's third novel, *L'Amphiphone* (1969), is recognizably in the same vein. Once again we have the waning show of strange, perhaps imaginary erudition, the play with parallels and mirror images, the preoccupation with erolemism and destruction. It seems however that M Aquin has attenuated the whirlpool complexities of *Trou de mémoire*. The bulk of the novel is a domestic tale of rape and murder, told in diary form; by Christine, the wife of the epileptic Jean-William Forestier. During a fit in a motel in Southern California, Jean-William attacks his

terms of medieval and Renaissance rhetoric. More importantly, the whole story is interwoven with a parallel story, that of a sixteenth-century scientist Jules-César Beausang (on whom Christine is supposed to be writing a thesis). Gradually we learn about his life and death and about the inauthentic memoirs attributed to him, but actually composed largely by a turncoat Turin priest who had assumed Beausang's identity. The effect is to cast doubt on the authenticity of all this sixteenth-century business (together with the extravagant erudition which buttresses it)—and thus implicitly on the foreground story. Like the other two novels it is fascinating, bewildering and depressing, but in them it was easier to see the point of it all than in *L'Antiphonre*.

Apparently this horror-story has nothing much to do with Ila author's earlier political themes; but who knows? It shares with the earlier novels the destructive and illogical form which M Aquin sees as inevitable in times of revolution, his aim being always to make the shape of his books express his own experience and the experience of his country. For the new reader, *Prochain episode* is perhaps the best

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